

The Division of Water Quality Basinwide Planning Program's Annual Report to the ERC – Oct. 1, 2010 through Sept. 30, 2011

The Division of Water Quality's (DWQ) Basinwide Planning Unit conducted substantial work with stakeholder input during this year, and in an effort to minimize the impacts from budget reductions, have maintained public participation through increased electronic communication instead of onsite meetings. Stakeholders provide watershed information that is pertinent to protecting and enhancing water quality throughout each basin. Work was done across all 17 river basins but because of the five-year rotating basin cycle, some basins received more attention during the year.

During this reporting period, basinwide management plans were completed and approved by the N.C. Environmental Management Commission (EMC) for the following river basins: **Tar-Pamlico, French Broad and New River**. River basins with plans approaching final draft stages during this period include: **Roanoke, Cape Fear, Savannah, Hiwassee and Little Tennessee River**. Water quality issues identified in basinwide plans provide an opportunity for local governments, natural resource groups, researchers, soil and water agencies and others to leverage recommendations provided in basinwide plans when applying for several types of grant funding and loan programs.

Basin Overviews

Tar-Pamlico River Basin. Current and emerging basin water quality issues were discussed with stakeholders including the Upper Tar Collaborative, Tar-Pamlico Basin Association (discharger coalition), Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Agriculture Task Force Committee, Greenville Flow Study Technical Advisory Group (TAG), Tar-Pamlico River Basin Water Resources Plan TAG, and East Carolina University. Contacts were made with municipal governing bodies for their water quality initiatives and management recommendations to be included in the river basin plan. This river basin plan focuses on longer-term water quality parameters and trends; identifies areas within the Nutrient Sensitive Waters (NSW) strategy to improve upon; and provides an action plan to address impaired waters and emerging water quality issues. The Tar-Pamlico River Basinwide Water Quality Plan underwent public review in September 2010, and was approved by the EMC in January 2011. The plan is available online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ps/bpu> .

French Broad River Basin. The French Broad River Basinwide Water Quality Plan had high interest and support from more than 20 organizations and community groups who are stakeholders in the western North Carolina. For this reason, the next basinwide plan for this area will be coordinated and prepared by staff located in the DENR Asheville Regional Office. This action will ensure availability to local stakeholders and will save on staff travel costs from Raleigh. Involved stakeholders include Toe River Valley Watch, Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, county and town governments, local businesses and industries such as the Unimin and QuartzCorp mining companies, and Mills River Partnership. The 2011 French Broad River Basinwide Water Quality Plan underwent public review December 2010 and was approved by the EMC in May 2011. The plan is available online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ps/bpu> .

New River Basin. The New River Basinwide Water Quality Plan involved input from the National Committee for the New River, local Soil & Water Conservation Districts, U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies. The New River Basinwide Water Quality Plan underwent public review in May 2011 and was approved by the EMC in September 2011. The entire plan is available online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ps/bpu> .

Cape Fear Basin. Staff is developing the 2012 Cape Fear River basinwide water quality management plan. This work includes participating in monitoring and modeling workgroups to review and revise wastewater dischargers' permitting needs and to address the potential for additional modeling to support new and expanding wastewater discharge needs within the basin. Work is ongoing with DENR agencies, local governments and other stakeholders to evaluate the current water quality issues and identify watersheds in need of implementation and protection plans. Participation has been ongoing in technical advisory and watershed groups, including the Rocky River Management Team, Cape Fear monitoring and modeling workgroup, Tick Creek watershed planning, Great Coharie watershed planning, and Smith Creek watershed planning.

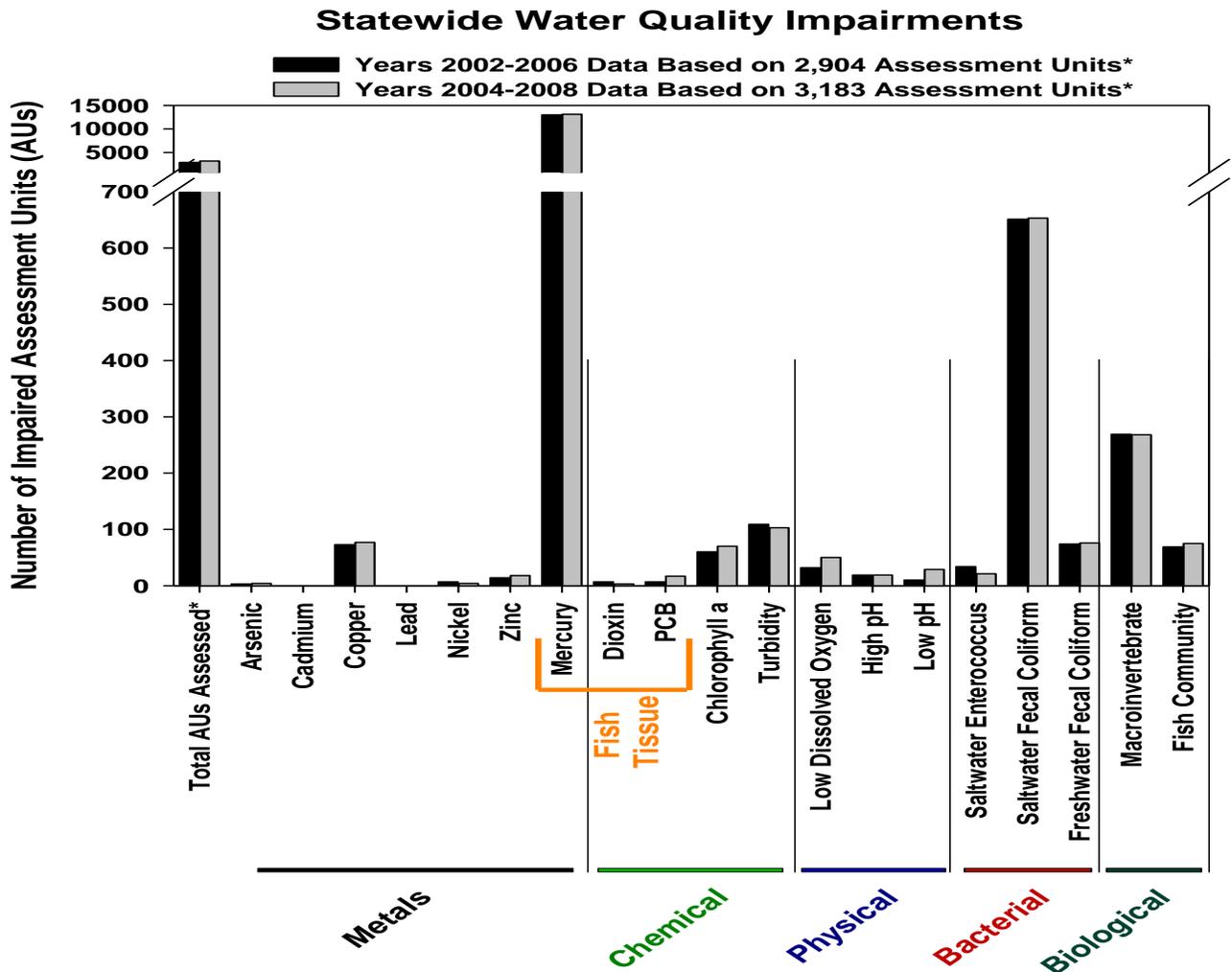
Neuse River Basin. Implementation of the Neuse River Basinwide Water Quality Action Plan continues, following EMC approval in July 2009. Eight municipalities were designated for Phase II stormwater protection in 2010 as a result. Work with the scientific community to identify and fill additional research needs to help direct future management decisions has also continued, as has staff participation in several technical advisory and watershed groups.

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Other River Basins. Substantial work has also been completed in the **Roanoke, Savannah, Hiwassee** and **Little Tennessee River** basins during this period and draft plans are nearing completion. Stakeholders have included the Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River; Little Tennessee Watershed Association, Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance and federal, state and local agencies. A workshop entitled “State of the Tuck” was recently held and staff participated on the panel.

Water Quality Impairments

Water quality impairments are identified every other year by the Division of Water Quality through the “use support” assessment process for N.C. surface waters. These impairments are compiled and submitted to the U.S. EPA for review and approval pursuant to Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. The results of impairment are based on a five-year compilation of water quality data that has been quality assured and quality controlled. For example, the 2010 year impairments are based on data collected from 2004-2008. The following graph illustrates the most recent (2008 and 2010) water quality impairments for North Carolina:



* An assessment unit (AU) is a stream segment, lake or estuarine area that is assessed and assigned an identifying number. The AU will vary in size (miles or acres) depending on unique characteristics of the waterbody. Not all AUs are monitored for all of the parameters in the graph above, and mercury is a statewide impairment based on an advisory by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.